

**Libby Community Advisory Group
Meeting Summary
January 25, 2001**

Introductions

Gerald Mueller and Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) members present introduced themselves. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

Agenda

Mr. Mueller reviewed an agenda for this meeting including the following topics:

- TOSC Subcommittee Report
- Medical Trust Subcommittee Report
- Agency Reports
 - EPA
 - ATSDR
 - Lincoln County
 - DEQ
 - St. John's Hospital
- Public Comment

Correction to the January Meeting Summary

Mike Switzer's name should have been included in the meeting attendance list.

TOSC Subcommittee Report

Kirby Maki reported on behalf of the subcommittee which also includes Clinton Maynard, Rick Palagi, Don Wilkins, and George Bauer. The subcommittee met and identified three areas in which TOSC might provide its assistance, research review, education and outreach, and interpretation of medical questions. The subcommittee will make a recommendation concerning a scope of work for TOSC's support at the next CAG meeting.

Medical Trust Subcommittee Report

Kerry Beasley reported on behalf of the subcommittee which also includes Sandy Wagner, Leroy Thom, Gayla Benefield, Cyrus Lee, Carrie Dedrick, and John Rider. Ms. Beasley passed out for CAG review a draft health plan prepared by the Intermountain Administrators and the subcommittee entitled, "Health Benefit Plan for Libby Asbestos Exposure". The purpose of the plan would be to provide medical care coverage for people exposed to asbestos as a result of W.R. Grace operations in Libby. Possible funding sources are addressed in the plan. Ms. Beasley asked that CAG members study the draft plan document so that it can be discussed at the next CAG meeting.

CAG Member Question - Has the subcommittee done a side-by-side analysis of this plan and the W.R. Grace medical plan?

Answer - No. The subcommittee has not focused its efforts on the deficiencies in the W.R. Grace Plan. We opted instead to develop what we believe is the appropriate plan for Libby.

CAG Member Question - Who would be the administrator of this plan?

Answer - A group of community people.

CAG Member Question - The plan handed out is a draft, correct?

Answer - Yes, it is a draft. We need comments from the CAG and community before finalizing it.

CAG Member Question - Can copies of the plan be made available at the EPA Information Center?

Answer - Yes. EPA will also announce its availability in the questions and answers published in the local newspapers.

EPA Report

Wendy Thomi stated that the next CAG meeting on February 8 will be held in the City Council chambers because the Ponderosa Room will not be available.

Duc Nguyen, EPA On-Scene Coordinator stated that Paul Peronard intended to attend this meeting but had to attend instead the US District Court ordered mediation session in Portland, Oregon, concerning EPA access to the W.R. Grace mine for disposal of asbestos-contaminated waste. Because the session took place today, Mr. Nguyen did not know its results. Mr. Nguyen also stated that design is proceeding on a new disposal cell next to the existing Lincoln County land fill to take the 50,000 cubic yards of contaminated material being stored in the long shed at the screening plant site. This cell will be used if EPA fails to gain access to the mine for disposal. Finally, Mr. Nguyen said that EPA has received public comments on phase 2 of the residential sampling plan and intends to finalize it this month so that sampling can begin in February.

CAG Member Question - Press reports indicate that EPA is apparently removing asbestos contaminated insulation from homes in Minneapolis. If EPA can remove it there, why not here?

Answer - EPA is removing contaminated soils from gardens, not insulation in homes. We will report on the Minneapolis activities in the questions and answers we publish in local Libby newspapers.

CAG Member Question - Have the 162 homes on the County's vermiculite insulation registry been sampled for asbestos?

Answer - EPA has sampled some but not all of the homes on the registry. The results of this sampling have not been reported because of the pending change in analytical technique that must be officially approved. We also do not yet know what concentration of tremolite asbestos constitutes a health risk. We also do not know whether tremolite particles smaller than 5 microns constitute a health risk. The risk assessment is designed to give us this information. Until the risk assessment is completed, EPA is advising people not to disturb vermiculite insulation.

CAG Member Question - Can EPA say now that if it is not disturbed that asbestos-contaminated vermiculite insulation is not a health risk?

Answer - Because tremolite asbestos is a new problem, we cannot answer until the risk assessment is completed.

CAG Member Question - Will the medical screening results shed light on home insulation as a possible exposure pathway?

Answer - The medical screening had a different purpose, to identify potential illness in the groups of people at risk for asbestos-related disease such as workers, workers' families, people who played in vermiculite piles, etc. The risk assessment and phase 2 of the residential building sampling are designed to enable us to understand the significance of tremolite-contaminated vermiculite home insulation to public health.

CAG Member Question - Most studies of health impacts of asbestos have been on chrysotile asbestos. If the risk assessment determines that tremolite asbestos is more toxic, will EPA

remove contaminated insulation from Libby homes?

Answer - The federal Superfund law authorizes EPA to clean up contaminated materials such as soil that may become airborne and threaten public health. We don't know if we have the legal authority to remove asbestos-contaminated insulation. Also, there are some 350,000 to 1,000,000 homes nation wide that contain vermiculite insulation. EPA may also not have the funding to remove home insulation.

CAG Member Question - If asbestos from home insulation is able to become airborne and then constitute a public health hazard, who is responsible for taking care of it?

Answer - If sampling and the risk assessment determines that the insulation is a health hazard, then EPA may step in.

Audience Member Comment - Estimates to remove asbestos-contaminated insulation range from \$2,000 to \$3,000. Many people in Libby cannot afford this amount.

Response - EPA personnel have elevated this issue to the headquarters level. The risk assessment is a powerful document. If tremolite-contaminated vermiculite insulation is a hazard to human health, then we may get the authority and funding to remove it.

CAG Member Comment - We have posed the insulation question to Paul Peronard over and over, but we have not heard anything.

Response - We know. This is one of the main ideas behind the risk assessment.

CAG Member Question - What is the time line for the risk assessment?

Answer - Completion was delayed by the bankruptcy of EPA's contractor as Mr. Peronard has previously discussed with the CAG. The plan now is to complete the assessment by June or July of this year.

CAG Member Question - Will the risk assessment address fiber size?

Answer - Yes.

Audience Member Comment - If a building containing asbestos-contaminated vermiculite insulation burns, then asbestos will become airborne and nearby people may be exposed. Should our fire marshal be made of aware of this risk?

Answer - Yes. EPA was in contact with fire officials last summer during the forest fires.

CAG Member Comment - EPA, ATSDR, and the research group headed by Dr. Holian are looking at the toxicity of tremolite asbestos, but it is a hard problem. Dr. Holian will be studying the toxicity of different fibers. All three are trying to find the best answers.

CAG Member Question - Does the risk assessment include a grid that identifies where people live? This area was hit harder.

Answer - The medical screening should be able to identify risk pathways. If non-occupational exposure is found to be a high risk, then further analysis within this group may be warranted.

CAG Member Question - How many homes in Libby have vermiculite insulation?

Answer - A significant percentage of homes twenty-years old and older have this insulation.

CAG Member Comment - In a letter dated August 1, 2000, Dr. Hugh Sloan wrote to Dr. Borace

that contaminated insulation exists in 1 million homes throughout the country and that minimal handling of the insulation produces significant exposure to asbestos.

Audience Member Comment - A portion of the \$8 million federal funds granted to the City should be used to cleanup our homes.

Response - This idea was previously proposed to the CAG, but the CAG voted not to support it.

ATSDR Report

Dan Strausbaugh, Montana Representative of ATSDR, reported that this week 738 letters explaining medical screening results have been mailed to participants in the medical screening program, bringing the total mailed to 1,830. By February 5, 2001, another 850 letters will be mailed increasing the total to 2,680. Letters have been delayed by the progress of one of the three x-ray readers, B-3, who is responsible for reviewing the results of all the x-rays read by B1 & B2 and "breaking the tie" between the other two if they disagree. Mr. Strausbaugh stated that the process of reading the x-rays is as follows. The first reader, B-1 reads an x-ray, fills in the result on the appropriate form and then mails the x-ray and form to ATSDR's contractor. The contractor then encodes the information and sends the x-ray to the second reader, B-2, who then repeats the process. After encoding the results from B-2, the ATSDR contractor then sends all the forms completed by B1 & B2 to the third reader, B-3. B-reader 3 looks at each form. If the first two readers, B-1 and B-2, did not agree, then B-3 sends a request to the contractor who then sends the x-ray to B-3. B-reader then reviews the x-ray and makes a decision to "break the tie". B-reader 3 then sends all the completed forms from B1 & B2 and any x-rays requested for tie breaking purpose back to the contractor. The contractor cannot mail the result letter to the person screened until it receives all the results from B-reader 3.

CAG Member Question - Who chose the x-ray readers?

Answer - ATSDR.

CAG Member Comment - The delay in receiving letters is causing paranoia in the community. You should not have used an x-ray reader who took time off or a sabbatical.

Response - ATSDR is addressing this issue; however, people should not assume that the delays are due to medical or "tie breaking" issues. The delays are due to procedural problems as explained above in the ATSDR Report

CAG Member Question - When will all of the letters be finished and mailed?

Answer - ATSDR has established deliverables dates (timelines) for our contractor. ATSDR will report to the CAG on this issue at the 2/22 meeting.

CAG Member Question - Does ATSDR have a deadline for its contractor?

Answer - ATSDR will report to the CAG about this issue at its 2/22 meeting.

CAG Member Question - Does ATSDR have performance criteria in its contract with the B-readers and its contractor?

Answer - I don't know contract details. ATSDR will report to the CAG about this issue at its 2/22 meeting

CAG Member Question - Of the letters issued to date, how many have a clean bill of health?

Answer - I will pass this question to Dr. Lybarger who will report to the CAG on letter results on

February 22. Dr. Lybarger will be reporting on the complete results of the x-rays, pulmonary function test, and questionnaire results for only the first 1,200 files, not the entire results for all of those screened.

Question from Dan Strausbaugh to the CAG - ATSDR will be reporting on the Libby screening at the American Public Health Association meeting in October in Atlanta, Georgia. Who from the Libby community would the CAG recommend participate on this panel?

CAG Response - The CAG recommended that Ron Anderson be invited to cover the history of the asbestos situation in Libby, Gayla Benefield be invited to present the view the asbestos victims, Dr. Brad Black be invited to discuss the medical situation, and Mayor Berget be invited to discuss the media coverage and the economic affects on Libby. It further recommended that ATSDR fund the participation of all four participants.

Lincoln County Report

Commissioner John Konzen reported that the attorney is researching the ordinance discussed at the January 17, 2001, public meeting, and the County hopes to report on a resolution concerning it at its February 8 meeting.

Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

John Constan introduced John Podolinsky who is one of two DEQ staff in the Asbestos Handling and Removal Program. Mr. Constan reported on behalf of DEQ about tests of the Glory Hole, an area at the mine thought to have been a disposal site in the past, and petroleum contamination at the export plant site. Two types of tests were conducted at the Glory Hole. A pit was dug through the Glory Hole, and nothing was discovered. Also a well was drilled to a depth of 250 feet and water samples were taken. Again, no pollutants were found. The ground water in the well will be sampled in the spring.

St. John's Hospital Report

Dr. Brad Black stated that the Hospital had invited Dr. Andrij Holian to address the CAG tonight about his UM research program. However, because of the weather, Dr. Holian's presentation will be postponed until the next CAG meeting on February 8. He also reported that 184 people have sought assistance from the CARD Clinic in interpreting their medical screening results letter. In this sample, about 70% of those with asbestos-related diseases did not have occupational exposure. Dr. Black said that he expects the complete medical screening sample will show a high percentage of those with disease not to have direct occupational exposure to asbestos.

Public Comment

Audience Member Comment - We are still living with asbestos-contaminated insulation in our homes. We need them cleaned up. I could not in good conscience sell my home. People are dying. We should assume people are exposed and move to create an asbestos abatement district and begin cleaning up our houses.

CAG Member Comment - Libby has a very strong argument to make for EPA assistance to clean up our homes. This community experienced very high asbestos fiber load in our ambient air. The risk assessment of other areas are not applicable here because of our high ambient air concentrations and community wide asbestos exposure.

CAG Action - The CAG formed a subcommittee of Dr. Black, Don Wilkins, Sandy Wagner,

Kerry Beasley, and George Bauer and charged it with drafting a letter to EPA, state government, and Montana's Congressional delegation requesting funding to remove asbestos contaminated vermiculite insulation from Libby homes and businesses. The letter should make the argument that the high asbestos fiber load in Libby's ambient air and the high percentage of people without occupational exposure who have asbestos-related disease supports providing this assistance to Libby.

Audience Member Comment - Lyra Parker demonstrated the protective clothing that must be worn when handling asbestos and asbestos contaminated materials. She stated that people should not attempt to remove vermiculite insulation on their own. She stated that her new home built in 1994 had to be demolished because of contamination caused by tracking in asbestos contaminated dust and by washing contaminated clothing in her washer and dryer. She concluded by stating that Libby will not be clean until all of its homes are clean.

Comment by John Podolinsky - DEQ has regulations governing asbestos removal and anyone removing asbestos-contaminated insulation from their homes would have to comply with them. To remove the insulation, one must first have an inspection and an abatement plan. The actual removal must include air monitoring.

CAG Member Question - What ambient air standard must be met under the DEQ abatement program?

Answer by John Podolinsky - The standard is 0.01 fibers per cubic meter.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 8, 2001 from 7 to 9:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Libby City Hall. The agenda will include, as well as the normal agency reports the following topics:

- Discussion of the draft Health Benefit Plan for Libby Asbestos Exposure;
- Report from the TOSC subcommittee;
- Report from the subcommittee charged with drafting the letter to EPA, the state, and the Congressional delegation requesting funding to remove asbestos contaminated vermiculite insulation from Libby homes and businesses; and
- Presentation by Dr. Holian.

Appendix 1
CAG Member Attendance List
January 25, 2001

Members	Group/Organization Represented
George Bauer	City of Libby
Ken Hayes	Lincoln County Council on Aging (Alternate for Wilbur Wilson)
Mike Switzer	Asbestos Victim
Mike Noble	Asbestos Victim (Alternate for Leroy Thom)
K.W. Maki	Libby School District #4
George D. Keck	Libby Resident (Alternate for Bob Dedrick)
Sandy Wagner	Libby Resident
John Konzen	Lincoln County Commissioner
Duc Nguyen	EPA On-Scene Coordinator
David F. Latham	The Montanian
Wendy Thomi	EPA Community Involvement
Jenan Swensen-Dedrick	LCAVRO (Alternate for Gayla Benefield)
John Constan	Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Ron Anderson	Lincoln County Environmental Health
Dan C. Strausbaugh	ATSDR/Montana Office
Linda R. Collinson	Alternate for Norita Skramstad
Clinton Maynard	Area Asbestos Research Group
Don Wilkins	Lumber & Sawmill Workers
Brad Black	Lincoln County Health
Kerry Beasley	St. John's Lutheran Hospital

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